

Let's remove the curse from our promised land by giving God our first-fruits. Have a great week!

Blessings and favor always,

Pastor Heard

Part 28: Feel the Passion!

Texts:

Ecclesiastes 9:7 (The Message) - "Seize life!"

Another way to phrase this is: "Make the most of your life!" But how can you do that? Use the divine assistance God has made available to us.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (KJV) - "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. [15] For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Numbers 35:29-34 (NKJV) - "And these things shall be a statute of judgment to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. [30] Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty. [31] Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. [32] And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest. [33] So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. [34]

Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.”

Leviticus 18:26-28 (NKJV) - “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you [27] (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), [28] lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you.”

The Curse on Your Promised Land!

A. I cannot think of a single thing that would move God to act in our lives more than my subject today. Conversely, failing to obey has caused more pain and suffering than anything I know.

1. Now that we are in a stewardship campaign, I must explain the importance of 'faith-filled' giving. Like any sincere pastor, I would never want people to think that we only want their money. This is why many pastors neglect teaching on finances, even to the hurt of God's people.
2. Scripture teaches that "as a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Your thoughts about a subject and what you believe will determine the action you take. For example, men and women think differently about certain things.
3. **Joke:** “How Women Think”
Husband’s cellphone message to his wife: "Honey, I got hit by a car outside of the office. Paula brought me to the hospital and they have been doing lots of tests and X-rays. The blow to my head was very serious, but it shouldn't cause any permanent damage. But, I **do** have three broken ribs, a broken arm, a compound fracture in the left leg, and they may have to amputate my right foot."

Wife's response: "Who is Paula?"

4. There is much confusion about giving. Most incorrect thinking stems from a misunderstanding of God's biblical principle of tithes and offerings. It's so easy to rely on our own intellect rather than simply accepting God's Word at face value. If scripture says to do something, just believe it!
5. God didn't instruct us to give tithes and offerings because He needed our money—or His church needed money. Tithes and offerings can never "buy" a blessing; nor is tithing merely an Old Testament practice commanded by the Law.
 - a. Those who teach such a concept demonstrate their ignorance of God's Word and should never be taken seriously.
 - b. If you choose to believe or embrace such teaching, it will be to your own detriment and hurt.
6. God chose the method of tithes and offerings because it works! When practiced correctly, it will work every time—without any adjustments or changes. It's very rare, with the passing of time, that our human principles require no changes.
7. **Joke:** Did you hear about the lady who was on trial for killing her husband with a hammer while eating his dinner? The prosecutor asked, "Isn't it true that you have been married twice before and that both of your previous husbands died from eating poisonous mushrooms?"
"That's true," she replied. "It was very unfortunate."
"Well then," the prosecutor demanded, "how do you explain the death of this husband from the blow of a hammer to his head?"
The wife answered, "Well, he wouldn't eat mushrooms."
8. God's Word is never like that. It works every time, because it is forever settled in the heavens.

B. Why does faith-filled giving work?

1. We've always heard about the importance of giving, but what is the true ***purpose*** for giving? Let's examine the reasons for faith-filled believers to give God their tithes and offerings.
2. What happened at the small town of Ai teaches an incredible truth for giving. You may be surprised!
3. Israel's history reveals how God delivered them from poverty and slavery to abundance and prominence. It is a true 'rags to riches' story of abject poverty and enslavement to elevation and supernatural favor. But it's also a parallel of our deliverance from the bondage of sin into the liberty of Jesus Christ.
4. God promised to give Israel: the entire Promised Land that flowed with milk and honey; wells they had not dug; and houses they had not built. Great blessings are also promised those who become His children.
5. All He asked from Israel was Jericho, the first city to be conquered after crossing the Jordan River, as the tithe of the land.
 - a. What was the reason for God's request? Unlike us humans, God ***always*** has a reason for what He does. Giving Him the tithe would remove the curse that was on their blessing!
 - b. **Joshua 6:17-19 (NKJV)** - "Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. [18] And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. [19] But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."
 - c. The word 'accursed' literally means: appointed to destruction.
6. Achan wanted his part—***right then!*** Because he refused to trust God for the future, he took what rightfully belonged to God.

- a. By keeping part of the tithe of the land, Achan inadvertently took upon himself the curse that was upon the land.
- b. As a result, the entire nation of Israel became cursed and suffered a humiliating defeat. Mighty, invincible Israel was defeated by a tiny village!
- c. **Joshua 7:11-12 (NKJV)** - "ISRAEL has sinned, and THEY have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded THEM. For THEY have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and THEY have also put it among THEIR own stuff. [12] Therefore the CHILDREN of ISRAEL could not stand before THEIR enemies, but turned THEIR backs before THEIR enemies, because THEY have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you."
- d. The tragic effect of Achan's sin upon Israel was ***much*** worse—and even more rapid than the infection of Ebola.

C. God wanted to remove more than the curse of Jericho from Israel's blessing.

- 1. The Book of Genesis reveals that not only was Adam cursed when he sinned, the entire world was cursed. All of mankind and the earth were marked for destruction.
- 2. Though clearly stated in Genesis, most people fail to realize that sin has cursed the entire world and its resources.
 - a. We tend to think that only mankind will face judgment. That isn't true. Because of the defilement upon the earth, it will face judgment as well.
 - b. **Genesis 3:17-18 (NKJV)** - "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. [18] Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you."

- c. **Isaiah 24:5-6 (NKJV)** - "The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, Changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant. [6] Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, And those who dwell in it are desolate."
 - d. Through the curse inflicted upon the world by his sin, Adam literally handed his dominion over the earth to the enemy.
- 3. Can your promised land be cursed? Not only is such a possibility stated in our text, but in Leviticus, chapter 18, God's reason for removing the inhabitants and transferring the land to Israel was because of further defilement. If the curse of Adam's sin is multiplied by each succeeding generation, think how much greater the curse is today!
- 4. As Adam's seed, we have been cursed by his disobedience. The purpose for Christ's coming was to transfer the curse of sin to Himself.
 - a. **Galatians 3:13 (NKJV)** - "Christ has redeemed us (Adam's seed) from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree)"
- 5. To experience freedom from the curse, we must surrender our lives to Him and be cleansed by His blood. Only then can we enjoy life to the fullest, or as Jesus said, "have life more abundantly."
- 6. Just as God has cleansed, saved, and freed us from the curse of sin, He will also purge and free this world from the curse of Adam's fall. Mankind was cleansed by His blood; but the world will be cleansed with fire.
 - a. **2 Peter 3:12-13 (NKJV)** - "...looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."
 - b. Not only can our promised land be cursed, we can contribute to further contamination of the world's resources.

7. In our text, one way of defiling the land was committing murder. To prevent compounding the curse, Deuteronomy, chapter 21, gives elaborate procedures for redeeming and cleansing the land.
8. Leviticus, chapter 18, names many sins that defile the land, some of which are common in our day. If the wicked inhabitants of the land were vomited out so that Israel could possess it, what must be in store for our world!

D. Are you tired of being defeated by problems that should be easily overcome? Is someone else getting the promotion you deserve?

1. Perhaps, like Israel, you have not honored God with the portion He requires to sanctify and redeem your inheritance and blessing. Could your blessing be marked with a curse?
2. Are you struggling financially? ...with your health? ...your home? Could there be a reason?
 - a. **Haggai 1:6-7 (NKJV)** - "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes." [7] Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways!"
3. After all God had done for Israel—and for each of us, He only asked them for Jericho. It was not because He needed the city; His intention was for this city to break the curse on the land. Just as He took our sins, He wants to take the curse for us!
4. This is why the tithe matters to God. He wants to use it to break the curse over our possessions so that He may bless His children.

E. As stated before, the blood of Jesus was shed to cleanse us from sin.

1. Some may ask, why didn't God cleanse the world at the same time He paid for man's sins on the cross? The answer is simple: atonement is by faith.
2. To experience atonement by His blood, you must first believe in Christ.
 - a. **Romans 10:10 (NKJV)** - "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
 - b. Only man has that ability. The earth and its resources do not.
 - c. Second, people are still sinning. When Adam sinned just once, the land was cursed. The people of the world are sinning every day, which means the land continues to be defiled, over and over again.
3. Israel, in the Old Testament, was a type of the New Testament believer. To be purged from sin by Calvary's sacrificial blood, we must surrender our lives to Christ—just as the doorposts of Israel's homes had to be covered by the blood of the Passover lamb.
4. As believers, the first-fruits of our blessings must be surrendered to God for the curse to be removed—just as Israel had to surrender Jericho to enjoy the benefits and resources of their promised land. If the curse is not removed from our inheritance, we will bring a curse into our homes.
5. Enjoying this world's resources is much like eating almonds. Most people do not realize that almonds contain cyanide. Before eating, they must be treated. Unless heat is applied, the poison will kill you.
 - a. Lima beans, or butter beans, also contain cyanide. If the poison is not first removed by cooking, the beans will kill you.
 - b. The same is true for green potatoes. Americans die each year because they do not realize that green potatoes contain a deadly poison called glycoalkaloid.
 - c. Castor oil, a medicinal supplement, is made from castor beans. Just one extremely poisonous castor bean can kill a grown man. To kill the deadly poison, the beans must be processed.

6. For Israel to enjoy the promised land, Jericho would have to be given to God so He could process and remove the curse. It was the only way for His people to prosper and enjoy their blessings.
7. That's why God asks you to give Him the tithe, or first fruits. The first 10 percent sanctifies the other 90 percent and removes the curse.
8. Once you understand this principle, you quickly realize the foolishness of thinking that tithing was part of the Law or the Old Testament era. Until the earth is purged with fire, the curse will remain upon the earth. This is why God still asks for the tithe.

F. Just like salvation, the principle of giving only works by faith.

1. To be saved and experience sanctification, you must believe. Similarly, to redeem and sanctify your finances, you must believe—and be a faith-filled giver. No longer can you give grudgingly.
2. If someone rejects and refuses to give their heart to God, the scripture teaches they will be lost—even though a remedy was available. If you reject the principle of giving, your blessing will still have a curse upon it.
3. Tithing is God's plan to remove the curse, bless you and your resources, and cause you to prosper.
4. Just as you cannot be saved without surrendering your heart to God in faith, you cannot enjoy the **fullness** of your blessing without faithfully surrendering the tithe.
5. Some may ask, but what about those who prosper, such as Donald Trump, but aren't saved?
 - a. In **Psalms 73:2-3 (KJV)**, the psalmist Asaph asked the same question: "But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. [3] For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked."
 - b. But he watched long enough to see his question answered.

- c. **Psalm 73:18-19 (NKJV)** - "Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. [19] Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors."

G. Because Achan disobeyed and kept the tithe, we know he was not a faith-filled giver.

1. Achan must have thought, "I'm going to get mine now while I have the chance, rather than give what I have to God with a spirit of expectancy."
2. Because he kept the tithe, the curse remained on Israel's inheritance, and their promised land was not blessed.
3. Because of Achan's disobedience, a little village defeated the mighty army of Israel. A village that should have been easily defeated, easily defeated them!
4. Similarly, when we do not honor God by giving Him our tithe, the curse remains on what we have, no matter how 'saved' we may be.

- a. **Malachi 3:9-12 (NKJV)** - "You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. [10] Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. [11] "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the LORD of hosts; [12] "And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the Lord of hosts."

5. By giving God the tithe, the devourer is rebuked!
6. How do you become a faith-filled giver? Obviously, you must first understand the meaning of the word 'faith-filled.'

- a. Faithful giving is giving God a 'tenth,' which the Bible teaches is His portion. That can be done without having any faith.
- b. Faith-filled giving means you give, **expecting** God to bless you!

H. So, what is faith-filled giving?

1. **An Act of Devotion:** When the little widow gave her all, it was her act of devotion.
2. **An Act of Obedience: Isaiah 1:19-20 (NKJV)** - "If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; [20] But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."
3. **An Act of Partnership:** Taking God as your financial partner is much better than having Warren Buffet manage your finances. When God is your Partner, you can expect incredible things to happen!
4. **An Act of Investing:** You will invest in the one thing that will never diminish—God's church. Even the very gates of hell will never prevail against His church!
 - a. Raul Cavazos related his story of God telling him to give the \$100 bill in his pocket. He had other funds with him, but God said to give the hundred, and he obeyed. Tudor Bismark was with us that day and no sooner had Raul given the \$100, Tudor said, "Someone just gave a \$100 bill and he is going to receive a 1,000 fold increase." Tudor couldn't possibly have seen the amount Raul had given, but two days later, his company gave him \$100,000 in stock options—for free—which was a 1,000 fold increase!
5. **An Act of Ownership:** Tithing is an acknowledgment that God owns everything you have. That's how you'll begin to take ownership of the dream, as you rightfully should. No longer will it be "their" church. As part of the body of Christ, it's also "your" church!

6. **An Act of Assurance:** You cannot guarantee your own future, nor can the government or an employer. The only certainty in this life is death and taxes—unless everything has been placed in God's capable hands. When you tithe, you become recession proof.

a. **Psalm 37:25 (NKJV)** - "I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread."

7. **An Act of Warfare:** As we've taught today, through giving, God rebukes the devourer—just as He said He would.

a. Giving your tithe is like a computer virus that attaches itself to an email. To do damage, a hacker has to find a way into the computer. At times, the virus will be hidden in an email. Thinking the message is important, the recipient will open the email and—wham! The virus takes over.

b. Because Adam had been given dominion over the earth, he had to forfeit his rights to the enemy. To bless His people, God had to legally find a way to exercise authority over our resources in the earth realm. Tithing provides that opening for God to control our finances and shower us with blessings too numerous to count!